

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior listings of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims

1. (Currently Amended) A flexible milk hose made from a uniform material for connecting a teat cup to a multiway valve in an automatic milking plant, comprising:

a first end portion for connection to a connecting neck of the teat cup;

a second end portion for connection to a connecting neck of the multiway valve, and;

a centre piece disposed between and connecting said first and second end portions and having a substantially constant interior diameter, ~~and said centre piece~~ including spaced-apart reinforcement elements which at least partially enclose a circumference of a predetermined area of the centre piece, the centre piece ~~having being~~ configured to have a greater flexibility than said first and second end portions, said flexibility increasing towards a middle of the centre piece.

2-4. Cancelled

5. (Currently Amended) A flexible milk hose according to claim 1, wherein the distance between two respective ~~neighbouring adjacent~~ reinforcement elements decreases from the middle of the centre piece in directions towards the respective first and second end portions.

6. (Currently Amended) A flexible milk hose according to claim 1, wherein the reinforcement elements ~~are implemented as~~ comprise spaced-apart elevations of material enclosing the circumference of the centre piece at least partially.

7. (Currently Amended) A flexible milk hose according to claim 6, wherein a wall thickness of each of said spaced-apart elevations of material exceeds a wall thickness ~~in~~of an area located between two adjacent spaced-apart elevations of material, the wall thicknesses being defined transversely relative to a longitudinal dimension of the milk hose.

8. Cancelled

9. (Currently Amended) A flexible milk hose according to claim 1, wherein the first and second end portions each have formed thereon a reinforcement ~~element~~member, the reinforcement members being disposed on respective opposite sides of the centre piece, the reinforcement members each comprising an enlarged portion of material having a wall thickness which exceeds the wall thickness of the respective residual area of the corresponding end portion, the wall thicknesses of the reinforcement members and the residual areas being defined transversely relative to a longitudinal dimension of the milk hose.

10. (Cancelled)

11. (Currently Amended) A flexible milk hose according to claim 1, wherein the hose ~~consists, at least partially,~~ comprises a permanently chemically passive and stable material which will not give off secretions to the milk during the milking operation.

12. (Currently Amended) A flexible milk hose according to claim 1, wherein a wall thickness of the centre piece, as defined transversely relative to a longitudinal dimension of the milk hose, decreases from the first and second end

portions in directions towards the middle of said centre piece.

13. (Currently Amended) A flexible milk hose according to claim 1, wherein a wall thickness of the reinforcement elements is smaller in the area of the middle of the centre piece than the wall thickness of the reinforcement elements arranged in areas of the centre piece closest to each end portion, the wall thicknesses being defined transversely relative to a longitudinal dimension of the milk hose.

14. (Currently Amended) A flexible milk hose according to claim 13, wherein the wall thickness of the reinforcement elements, as defined transversely relative to a longitudinal dimension of the milk hose, decreases continuously towards the middle of the centre piece.

15. (Currently Amended) A flexible milk hose according to claim 1, wherein a wall thickness of an intermediate area between two ~~neighbouring adjacent~~ reinforcement elements in the area of the middle of the centre piece is smaller than the wall thickness of the intermediate area ~~of the~~ between two adjacent reinforcement elements arranged in areas of said centre piece closest to each end portion, the wall thicknesses being defined transversely relative to a longitudinal dimension of the milk hose.

16. (Original) A flexible milk hose according to claim 15, wherein the wall thickness of the intermediate areas decreases continuously towards the middle of said centre piece.

17. (Currently Amended) A milk hose for connecting a teat cup to a multiway valve in an automatic milking plant,

said hose comprising a first end portion configured for connection to a connecting neck of the teat cup, a second end portion configured for connection to a connecting neck of the multiway valve, and a centre piece disposed between and interconnecting said first and second end portions and having an interior diameter which is substantially constant, said centre piece including a plurality of axially spaced reinforcement elements which extend circumferentially along an exterior of said centre ~~piece and permit~~piece, said centre piece being configured to have a greater flexibility than said first and second end portions, said flexibility increasing towards a middle of the centre piece.

18. (Currently Amended) A flexible milk hose according to claim 17, wherein the distance between adjacent reinforcement elements decreases from the middle of the centre piece in directions towards the respective first and second end portions.

19. (Previously Presented) A flexible milk hose according to claim 17, wherein the reinforcement elements are defined by spaced-apart elevations which enclose the circumference of the centre piece.

20. (Currently Amended) A flexible milk hose according to claim 19, wherein a wall thickness of each of said elevations exceeds a wall thickness in an area located between two adjacent elevations, the wall thicknesses being defined transversely relative to a longitudinal dimension of the milk hose.

21. (Currently Amended) A flexible milk hose according to claim 17, wherein the first and second end portions each define thereon a reinforcement ~~element~~member, the

reinforcement members being disposed on respective opposite sides of the centre piece and having wall thicknesses which exceed wall thicknesses of the respective first and second end portions, the wall thicknesses being defined transversely relative to a longitudinal dimension of the milk hose.

22. (Cancelled)

23. (Previously Presented) A flexible milk hose according to claim 17, wherein the centre piece comprises a permanently chemically passive and stable material which will not give off secretions to the milk during the milking operation.

24. (Currently Amended) A flexible milk hose according to claim 17, wherein a wall thickness of the centre piece, as defined transversely relative to a longitudinal dimension of the milk hose, decreases in ~~a direction~~ directions from the first and second end portions towards a middle of said centre piece.

25. (Currently Amended) A flexible milk hose according to claim 17, wherein ~~a wall thickness~~ wall thicknesses of the reinforcement elements ~~is~~ are smaller in the area of a middle of the centre piece than ~~a wall thickness~~ wall thicknesses of the reinforcement elements disposed adjacent the end portions, the wall thicknesses of the reinforcement elements being defined transversely relative to a longitudinal dimension of the milk hose.

26. (Currently Amended) A flexible milk hose according to claim 25, wherein the wall ~~thickness~~ thicknesses of the reinforcement elements ~~decreases~~ decrease continuously from

the end portions in directions towards the middle of the centre piece.

27. (Currently Amended) A flexible milk hose according to claim 17, wherein a wall thickness of an intermediate area between two adjacent reinforcement elements disposed adjacent a middle of the centre piece is smaller than a wall thickness of an intermediate area between two adjacent reinforcement elements disposed adjacent the respective end portions, the wall thicknesses of the reinforcement elements being defined transversely relative to a longitudinal dimension of the milk hose.

28. (Currently Amended) A flexible milk hose according to claim 27, wherein the wall thickness of the intermediate areas decreases continuously in ~~a direction~~ directions from the first and second end portions towards the middle of said centre piece.

29. (Previously Presented) A flexible milk hose according to claim 17, wherein the milk hose is made of plastic.

30. (Previously Presented) A milk hose according to claim 17, wherein the milk hose is adapted to be stretched and compressed in the longitudinal direction.

31. (Previously Presented) A flexible milk hose according to claim 1, wherein the milk hose is made of plastic.

32. (Previously Presented) A milk hose according to claim 1, wherein the milk hose is adapted to be stretched and compressed in the longitudinal direction.

33. (Cancelled)

34. (New) A flexible milk hose according to claim 9 wherein the reinforcement elements are distributed along substantially the entire longitudinal extent of the centre piece as defined between the respective reinforcement members.

35. (New) A flexible milk hose according to claim 21 wherein the reinforcement elements are distributed along substantially the entire longitudinal extent of the centre piece as defined between the respective reinforcement members.